

## **2010 Dropout Prevention and Public School Choice Conference "Engaging Students: Promoting Choices, Preventing Dropouts"**

***Nationwide, nearly one in three U.S. high school students drops out before graduating. Approximately 1.2 million students drop out each year—7,000 every school day, one every 26 seconds.***

***Not all students learn in the same way, and not all struggling students need the same interventions. South Carolina is a leader in advancing public school choice models to meet varying needs of students. Currently, there are over 496 public school choice programs in schools and districts across the state.***

On March 5, 2010, the South Carolina Department of Education will host a statewide summit addressing dropout prevention and public school choice. The one-day summit will be held at the Columbia Conference Center from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Awareness of effective engagement strategies is an important factor in preventing dropouts. Additionally, providing students, parents, and communities with diversified choice options in public education enhances South Carolina's efforts to prepare students for graduation and post-secondary pursuits. Everyone from students and parents to school board members and business leaders must not only be aware of, but also engage in utilizing, effective dropout prevention strategies and varied educational environments that help students succeed.

The 2010 Dropout Prevention and Public School Choice Summit is a continuation of the efforts from the first dropout prevention summit and the public school choice conference in 2008. Now that we have brought the issues to the forefront, our goal is to provide tools and encourage collaboration among all sectors of the community in order to generate solutions to improve local graduation rates and enhance collegiate enrollment opportunities.

The Summit will highlight district and school options under public school choice—charter and magnet schools, Montessori, middle and early college, single gender instruction, evening high school, and language immersion—while also sharing information on successful data collection models, statewide policy, business/community/education partnerships, and successful dropout prevention strategies.

The Summit will also feature keynote speaker Dr. Robert Balfanz of the Everyone Graduates Center at The Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Balfanz will highlight South Carolina data and address ways in which we can improve student achievement through a higher level of engagement and increasing community involvement.

Three hundred participants are expected to attend. The attendees will be a cross section of the community including K-12 education, higher education, state agencies, the State Board of Education, community leaders, business representatives, faith-based organizations, and elected officials.

To register for the summit, please visit <http://ed.sc.gov/apps/regs/pscc/>. The registration fee for the Summit is \$30. For more information, please contact Aveene Coleman at [acoleman@ed.sc.gov](mailto:acoleman@ed.sc.gov) or Julie Shippy at [JShippy@ed.sc.gov](mailto:JShippy@ed.sc.gov).